



DOI: 10.22363/2312-8313-2025-12-3-359-365

EDN: BSNUCN

Notes / Научное сообщение

Specifics of demographic policy at the regional level: the case of the Republic of Tatarstan

Aigul Z. Khuramshina^{1,2}  , Yulduz R. Khayrullina^{1,3} , Farida T. Talibova¹ 

¹Family and Demography Center of Tatarstan Academy of Sciences, *Kazan, Russian Federation*

²Volga Region State University of Physical Culture, Sport and Tourism, *Kazan, Russian Federation*

³Center of Advanced Economic Research of Tatarstan Academy of Sciences, *Kazan, Russian Federation*

 aigulsuf@mail.ru

Abstract. The study analyzes theoretical approaches to understanding the essence of reproductive behavior, factors influencing its formation, the role and structure of demographic policy. The study considers the specifics of demographic policy, the evolution of Russian experience in managing demographic processes, and provides statistical data. Attention is drawn to the expansion of the range of socio-psychological and socio-cultural motivation of reproductive behavior. The state demographic policy is considered as a response to the challenges of the country's social development, and the key role of a number of documents is shown. The author shows crucial importance of the national projects “Healthcare”, “Demography”, “Education”, and “Culture” in solving the fertility crisis in the country. Most of the measures to support families with children and stimulate fertility were provided in the national Demography project. Attention is drawn to the launch of the new national project “Family”, which continues the best practices of the Demography project, as well as provides comprehensive support for families with children, reducing poverty, and creating a positive image of having many children. The study systematizes measures of demographic policy at the federal and regional levels, identifies their specifics in the Republic of Tatarstan in the context of changing patterns of reproductive behavior. Regional measures to support families with children and large families are presented in relation to the dynamics of demographic indicators of the republic in the period from the beginning of the 21st century to 2024. During the period of implementation of the measures, a more prosperous demographic state of the Republic of Tatarstan was noted in comparison with the regions of the Volga Federal District and Russia as a whole in terms of fertility and life expectancy. In 2022, the federal total fertility rate was 8.9‰, while the republican birth rate was 9.2‰.

Keywords: population dynamics, local governance, social sector management, reproductive behavior, young family, fertility motivation

Contribution. All the authors participated in the development of the concept of this review, data collection, processing and analysis, drafted the manuscript, and formulated the conclusions.



Funding. The article was prepared within the framework of the state assignment and implementation of scientific research under the GNCU “Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan”, 730000 R.16.1. ON17AA81000 “Analysis of the impact of economic, social and other factors on the development of the social institution of the family in the region”.

Conflicts of interest. The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Article history:

The article was submitted on 10.04.2025. The article was accepted on 05.06.2025.

For citation:

Khuramshina AZ, Khayrullina YuR, Talibova FT. Specifics of demographic policy at the regional level: The case of the Republic of Tatarstan. *RUDN Journal of Public Administration*. 2025;12(3):359–365. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8313-2025-12-3-359-365>

Особенности демографической политики — региональный аспект: опыт Республики Татарстан

А.З. Хурамшина^{1,2}  , Ю.Р. Хайруллина^{1,3} , Ф.Т. Талибова¹ 

¹Центр семьи и демографии Академии наук Республики Татарстан, Казань, Россия

²Поволжский государственный университет физической культуры, спорта и туризма, Казань, Россия

³Центр перспективных экономических исследований Академии наук Республики Татарстан, Казань, Россия

 aigulsuf@mail.ru

Аннотация. Проанализированы разработанные в рамках социологической науки и демографии теоретические подходы к пониманию сущности репродуктивного поведения, влияющих на его формирование факторов, роли и структуры демографической политики. Рассмотрены специфика демографической политики, эволюция российского опыта управления демографическими процессами, приведены статистические данные. Обращено внимание на расширение спектра социально-психологической и социально-культурной мотивации репродуктивного поведения. Государственная демографическая политика рассмотрена как ответ на вызовы общественного развития страны, показана ключевая роль ряда документов. Подчеркнуто решающее значение национальных проектов «Здравоохранение», «Демография», «Образование», «Культура» в решении кризиса рождаемости в стране в пользу ее повышения. Большинство мер по поддержке семей с детьми и стимулированию рождаемости предусматривались в национальном проекте «Демография». Уделено внимание началу реализации нового национального проекта «Семья», продолжающего лучший опыт проекта «Демография», а также предусматривающего всестороннюю поддержку семей с детьми, сокращение уровня бедности, формирование положительного образа многодетности. Систематизированы меры демографической политики федерального и регионального уровня, выявлена их специфика в Республике Татарстан в условиях изменения моделей репродуктивного поведения. Представлены региональные меры поддержки семей с детьми и многодетных семей в сопоставлении с динамикой демографических показателей республики в период с начала XXI в. по 2020-е гг., выделены эффективные меры. Указано на наличие специальных мер, направленных на повышение рождаемости в сельской местности. Отмечено более благополучное, в период реализации мер, демографическое состояние Республики Татарстан в сравнении с регионами Приволжского федерального округа и России в целом по показателям рождаемости, ожидаемой продолжительности жизни, так в 2022 г. федеральный общий коэффициент рождаемости составлял 8,9 ‰, а республиканский — 9,2 ‰.

Ключевые слова: динамика численности населения, местное управление, управление социальной сферой, репродуктивное поведение, молодая семья, мотивация рождаемости

Вклад авторов. Все авторы участвовали в разработке концепции исследования, сборе, обработке и анализе данных, написании текста рукописи, формулировке выводов.

Финансирование. Статья подготовлена в рамках государственного задания и выполнения научных исследований ГНБУ «Академия наук Республики Татарстан» 730000 Р. 16.1. ОН17АА81000 «Анализ влияния экономических, социальных и других факторов на развитие социального института семьи в регионе».

Заявление о конфликте интересов. Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

История статьи:

Поступила в редакцию 10.04.2025; принята к публикации 05.06.2025.

Для цитирования:

Хураמיшина А.З., Хайруллина Ю.Р., Талибова Ф.Т. Особенности демографической политики — региональный аспект: опыт Республики Татарстан // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Государственное и муниципальное управление. 2025. Т. 12. № 3. С. 359–365. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8313-2025-12-3-359-365>

Introduction

For two decades of the 21st century, the process of depopulation of the population has been taking place in Russia, which entails the need to realize the harmonious interaction of the reproductive interests of the family and the state. To create a favorable scenario for Russia's demographic future, it is necessary to scientifically understand the role, directions and methods of government participation in regulating the reproductive behavior of the population.

The purpose of the study is to review the state demographic policy and present its features in Tatarstan.

Supporters of the active role of the state in demographic policy through stimulating fertility were such Russian scientists as V.V. Elizarov, V.N. Kuznetsov, L.L. Rybakovsky [1], who considered it possible through consistent protectionism to neutralize the prevailing low-income type of reproductive behavior. A.G. Vishnevsky [2] within the framework of the concept of birth rate modernization, he held the opinion that as a part of the demographic transition, there has been change in the birth rate model in the world, a transformation of socio-cultural regulators of procreative behavior. In any model, it is important to understand the system of determinants of reproductive behavior in order to develop an adequate demographic policy. For example, within the framework of the factor concept, B.C. Uralnis [3] identifies the conditions, factors, subfactors and causes of demographic processes.

In the works of A.I. Antonov [4. P. 34] and V.A. Borisov [5. P. 183], the historical decline in the birth rate and the proportion of large families is justified by the lack of economic necessity for modern parents to have children as helpers in the household or material support in the present or future. On the contrary, each child requires more and more expenses and reduces the quality of life of the family.

According to V.N. Arkhangelsky [6], the decisive role in motivating fertility should be played not by economic factors, but by value, socio-psychological and socio-cultural ones. So that, as A.I. Antonov emphasizes [7], an individual needs children to feel like a full-fledged person with a significant role and status.

Results

The state demographic policy is designed to address the current situation of the correlation of economic and social factors, both contributing to the birth of more children in families and preventing this. Within the framework of economic measures, it is necessary to apply a variety of continuous and targeted measures of material support for fertility and families with children. Within the framework of socio-cultural measures, it is important to form and stimulate patterns of socially acceptable reproductive behavior, the norm of childhood, the needs for children, as well as transform the entire system of value orientations based on the potential of history, ethnocultural, religious traditions of peoples, socialization mechanisms for the formation of an appropriate lifestyle [8]. This is especially important and relevant among young people [9].

Russian demographic policy has a positive experience of consistent and comprehensive application of birth control measures in the period of the 80s of the XX century. A combination of economic and social measures made it possible in the late Soviet period to achieve the highest birth rate of 1.88 children per woman from the cohorts born in the 1950s and 1960s [10].

The next stage of the national demographic policy fell on the post-Soviet period (the 90s of the XX century). Typical for this period was the postponement of the first births in young age cohorts, a change in the model of marital and reproductive behavior, and a drop in the total fertility rate to 1.17 [11].

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the birth rate in Russia has increased [12]. So, from 1999 to 2004, the number of births per thousand of the population increased by 26.5%. This was influenced by positive changes in the composition of the population by gender and age and an increase in age-related fertility rates. The result was an increase in the total fertility rate by 2004 to 1.34–1.35, which at the same time is not enough to achieve simple reproduction of the population. For population growth, it should be at the level of 2.11, which was the case only in 1988 [13].

The response to the negative trends towards depopulation was the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation “On approval of the Concept of Demographic Policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025”¹. The implementation of the concept was carried out in two stages: at the first stage (2007–2010), some

¹ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated October 9, 2007 No. 1351 “On Approval of the Concept of Demographic Policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025” (with amendments and additions). URL: <https://base.garant.ru/191961/> (accessed: 20.02.2025). (In Russ.).

positive results were achieved thanks to measures to stimulate fertility and the maternity capital program². The birth rate increased for 4 consecutive years by an average of 77,000 births annually³.

At the second stage (2011–2018), the positive results were consolidated and the program was further developed. A large family is designated as the most important value, and a family with 2–3 children is the preferred social norm, and the need to exclude a situation when the birth of a child puts the family in a difficult financial situation or on the verge of poverty is emphasized.

The first decade of the 21st century in Russia was a period of economic growth and social stability, which affected the growth of the birth rate and the well-being of the family. This ensured that the post-Soviet birth rate peaked at 1.943 million children in 2014, but the birth rate has resumed falling since 2016⁴.

National projects aimed at the formation of human capital and implemented in 2019–2024: “Healthcare”⁵, “Demography”⁶, “Education”⁷ and “Culture”⁸ have become the response to the next demographic challenge.

To mobilize socio-cultural reserves to stimulate fertility, by decision of the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, 2024 was declared the Family Year⁹. Since the beginning of 2025, the new National Project “Family” has been implemented¹⁰.

Differentiated measures have been developed and applied at the regional demographic policy level, considering local specifics, family structure, and cultural traditions. While implementing the priorities of the Demographic Policy Concept, Tatarstan has demonstrated good indicators in the first decade of the 21st century: an annual increase in the birth rate and the population as a whole by 7.1 thousand

² Federal Law No. 256-FZ of December 29, 2006 “On additional measures of State support for families with children”. *Website of the President of Russia*. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/24820> (accessed: 20.02.2025). (In Russ.).

³ Birth rate, mortality and natural population growth by subjects of the Russian Federation. *Federal State Statistics Service*. URL: https://rosstat.gov.ru/bgd/regl/b11_13/isswww.exe/stg/d1/04-06.htm (accessed: 20.02.2025). (In Russ.).

⁴ So few children have been born in Russia for a long time. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. 18.04.2022. URL: https://www.ng.ru/economics/2024-04-18/1_8997_children.html?ysclid=lv6iqoqu30535584068 (accessed: 20.02.2025). (In Russ.).

⁵ Passport of the national project “Healthcare”. *Government of Russia*. URL: <http://government.ru/info/35561/> (accessed: 20.02.2025). (In Russ.).

⁶ Passport of the national project “Demography”. *Government of Russia*. URL: <http://government.ru/info/35559/> (accessed: 20.02.2025). (In Russ.).

⁷ Passport of the national project “Education”. *Government of Russia*. URL: <http://government.ru/info/35566/> (accessed: 20.02.2025). (In Russ.).

⁸ Passport of the national project “Culture”. *Government of Russia*. URL: <http://government.ru/info/35562/> (accessed: 20.02.2025). (In Russ.).

⁹ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated 22.11.2023 No. 875 “On holding the Year of the Family in the Russian Federation”. *The website of the President of Russia*. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/49978> (accessed: 20.02.2025). (In Russ.).

¹⁰ National project “Family”. *National Projects of the Russian Federation*. URL: <https://национальныепроекты.рф/new-projects/semya/> (accessed: 20.02.2025). (In Russ.).

people. But at the turn of the 10th and 20th years of the 21st century, the negative trend of natural population decline, aging, and reduction of labor resources recovered in the republic, as well as in Russia as a whole¹¹.

As part of the National Demography Project in Tatarstan, federal demographic policy measures have been supplemented by regional ones¹²:

- compensation for parents and childcare in non-profit educational organizations, provision of infant formulas, special dairy products, and free prescription medications for children under three years of age; payment of monthly allowances for children under 16 who study in an educational organization up to 18 years of age;
- payment of monthly transportation subsidies to students of general and secondary vocational education institutions up to 18 years old; a drug subsidy for children under 6 years of age, a subsidy to pay for the social standard of housing and utility costs within the republican consumption rate.

Special support measures have been scheduled for large families with three or more children, and measures to specifically support the birth rate in rural settlements. Special regional demographic policy measures in Tatarstan have made it possible to achieve the following indicators. In 2023, the total fertility rate in the country was 1.41, in the Volga Federal District — 1.36, and in the region — 1.45¹³.

In general, demographic indicators for the Republic of Tatarstan demonstrate its more prosperous situation, in comparison with national and regional indicators.

Conclusion

In order to develop further targeted measures to stimulate fertility in the region, a scientific analysis of the current demographic situation is carried out in the monitoring mode.

In general, to neutralize the downward trend in the birth rate in the region, it is necessary not only to maintain the current favorable socio-economic situation, improve the quality of family life, strengthen economic measures to support families with children and material measures aimed at motivating the birth of children, access to medical care, but also to mobilize and lobby the socio-cultural component of the prestige of the family lifestyle. parenthood, the birth of children, having many children, the revival of a multi-generational family as a special ethno-cultural code of the peoples of the region.

¹¹ Demographic pit. Will Tatarstan continue to fall? *Tatcenter*. URL: <https://tatcenter.ru/news/demograficheskaya-yama-prodolzhit-li-tatarstan-padenie/> (accessed: 20.02.2025). (In Russ.).

¹² On the implementation of social support measures for families with children in the Republic of Tatarstan. *State Council of the Republic of Tatarstan*. URL: https://gossov.tatarstan.ru/file/gossov/docs/other_11238.pdf (accessed: 20.02.2025). (In Russ.).

¹³ The total fertility rate (unit, the value of the indicator for the year). *Federal State Statistics Service*. URL: <https://www.fedstat.ru/indicator/31517> (accessed: 20.02.2025). (In Russ.).

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Information about the authors:

Aigul Z. Khuramshina — Candidate of Sociological Sciences, Associate Professor, Leading Researcher, Director, Family and Demography Center of Tatarstan Academy of Sciences, 20 Bauman St., Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan, 420111, Russian Federation; Associate Professor of the Department of Social and Humanitarian Disciplines, Volga Region State University of Physical Culture, Sport and Tourism, 35 Village Universiade, Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan, 420010, Russian Federation (ORCID: 0000-0002-8384-0616) (SPIN-code: 4170-8961) (e-mail: aigulsuf@mail.ru).

Yulduz R. Khayrullina — Doctor of Sociological Sciences, Professor, Chief Researcher, Center of Advanced Economic Research of Tatarstan Academy of Sciences, 20 Bauman St., Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan, 420111, Russian Federation; Chief Researcher, Family and Demography Center of Tatarstan Academy of Sciences, 20 Bauman St., Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan, 420111, Russian Federation (ORCID: 0000-0003-4018-4628) (SPIN-code: 6936-5671) (e-mail: iouldouz@yandex.ru).

Farida T. Talibova — Research Fellow, Family and Demography Center of Tatarstan Academy of Sciences, 20 Bauman St., Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan, 420111, Russian Federation (ORCID 0009-0009-0440-0187) (SPIN-code: 4942-8892) (e-mail: far.galimova@yandex.ru).